



Tom Lantos

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 11, 2004

FOR INFORMATION CALL:
Lynne Weil (202) 225-6735

Congress Adopts Lantos Legislation on Preventing Spread of Global Anti-Semitism

Washington, DC – With toughened legislation passed by the House on Friday and the Senate on Sunday night, Congress would direct the State Department to respond to a recent surge in anti-Semitism worldwide through mandated annual reports and a new position at the department dedicated solely to this issue.

“Passing a robust measure to reverse the growth of global anti-Semitism has been an uphill battle this year in Congress,” said Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA). “Despite that, I am pleased that we have managed to produce a very good bill before the gavel falls on this year’s session. Now it is up to President Bush to follow through on this bipartisan effort to combat hatred of Jews around the world.”

Working with Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), last month Lantos managed to get the key provisions of his own bill dealing with anti-Semitism (H.R. 4230) integrated to a much weaker bill that had emerged from the Senate (S. 2292), sponsored by Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH). As amended by Lantos, the resulting bicameral Global Anti-Semitism Review Act requires the Secretary of State to establish a permanent Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and will require the Department to collect data on acts of anti-Semitism around the globe and to highlight it each year in annual human rights reports.

The State Department showed tremendous initial resistance to the Lantos provisions. In an unsigned memo sent to Lantos in July, the Department claimed that creating an office to monitor and fight anti-Semitism would “diminish credibility,” and show “favoritism” and “imbalance” in U.S. human rights policy – overlooking the existing offices at the State Department dedicated to promoting religious freedom, women’s rights, and Tibetan rights.

“Apart from being offensive and absurd, these comments demonstrate an appalling lack of comprehension by the State Department of the central danger that the re-emergence of anti-Semitism poses to America’s national interests,” Lantos said. “The stronger legislation as amended and passed by both the House and the Senate will force the Department to confront its alarming complacency on this issue.”

The legislation received a substantial boost in September when a bipartisan group of more than 100 prominent American political, religious, academic and cultural leaders signed a supporting letter arranged by the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

###